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Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Measures that would better streamline the policy guidelines related to the temporary duty assignment of staff in peacekeeping missions

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly decision 56/471 of 27 June 2002 on administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations, in which the Assembly decided to request the Secretary-General to suggest measures that would better streamline the policy guidelines related to the temporary duty assignment of staff in peacekeeping missions and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

The report reviews each category of mission staff eligible to be considered for detail or reassignment to, or between, a Department of Peacekeeping Operations field mission and outlines the process by which they may apply and be selected. Additionally, established organizational policy and guidelines on mission assignment/detail are reviewed in the light of relevant administrative instructions and improvements in the Department's internal mechanisms for addressing vacancy and mobility issues in field missions.

The General Assembly is invited to take note of the achievements to date and planned future activities described in the present report against the backdrop of the current global trend towards the reduction of civilian posts in peacekeeping operations and enhanced procedures and technologies for the identification of suitably qualified candidates to staff field missions.

* The document was submitted late to the conference services owing to the development of new internal recruitment policies that are being implemented within the Personnel Management and Support Service/Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Information regarding those policies is included in the report.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly, contained in its decision 56/471, that the Secretary-General suggest measures that would better streamline the policy guidelines related to the temporary duty assignment of staff in peacekeeping missions and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

2. The report looks at the process by which staff that are currently serving with a peacekeeping mission (both established and special) may apply for and be considered for temporary detail or reassignment to another peacekeeping mission. Additionally, it outlines the established policies and administrative instructions pertaining to the release of headquarters personnel for mission assignment/detail and the rotation of staff in the Field Service Officer (FSO) category.

3. All United Nations staff[1] serving in peacekeeping and peace-building environments are viewed as a valuable staff resource, whose field experience and knowledge of United Nations policies, practices and procedures are critical to meeting mission-mandated responsibilities. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations recognizes that locally recruited staff represent an important source of skilled and experienced personnel, whose career development may be enhanced by periods of service to other missions. Consequently, locally recruited staff have periodically been selected to fill vacancies in other missions, particularly during surge environments and for particular occupational groups.

4. While the Department recognizes the unique contribution made by United Nations Volunteers, military observers, civilian police, international consultants and gratis personnel to its global peacekeeping responsibilities, those personnel are not considered to be United Nations staff and hence are not considered within the scope of the present report.

II. Categories of mission personnel and administrative options for mission assignment/detail

5. Staff members holding 100 series staff contracts include Headquarters personnel on mission assignment/detail, staff members appointed to a particular mission (usually former 300 series staff who have met eligibility criteria for reappointment to 100 series staff contracts), locally recruited staff from established missions, locally recruited staff from special missions (usually former 300 series locally recruited staff who have met eligibility criteria for reappointment to 100 series staff contracts), FSOs and agency staff on 100 series contracts released for mission assignment.

6. *Mission assignment*. Professional or locally recruited staff from a parent office holding a 100 series staff contract may be assigned to an established mission for a temporary period of up to two years, during which their parent office continues to block their post for their return. An assignment to an established mission involves a change of official duty station. Upon completion of the mission assignment, such staff members return to the parent office. Based on operational requirements, if it is determined that a staff member is offered, and opts for, an extension of mission assignment beyond two years, the staff member may lose the lien on the post, or the right of return.

7. *Mission detail.* Professional or locally recruited staff from a parent office may also be detailed to a special mission for a temporary period (of up to two years), during which their parent office continues to block their post for their return. Upon completion of mission detail, such staff members are expected to return to their parent office. As with mission assignment, based on operational requirements, if it is determined that a staff member is offered, and opts for, an extension of mission detail beyond two years, the staff member may lose the lien on the post, or the right of return.

8. Locally recruited staff holding a 100 series appointment from special missions can be reassigned to another special mission. Provided that established criteria are adhered to, after six months, such staff can be considered for a reappointment as international staff (typically with a 300 series staff contract), but by doing so they forego all rights of return to their previous post.

9. Staff in the Field Service category (FSOs) are the only field staff which have a managed rotation policy. However, since March 2002, when the issuance of vacancy announcements became the norm for the filling of vacant field posts, FSOs have been encouraged to apply for relevant vacant positions, effectively enhancing career mobility options.

10. Staff holding 300 series staff contracts include international staff and locally recruited staff appointed for limited duration (ALD) assigned to one particular mission. Nevertheless, that is not seen as a restriction in terms of their mobility if dictated by operational necessity. Typically, if staff hold an ALD for three years or more and certain eligibility criteria are met they can be considered for reappointment to a 100 series staff contract.

11. International staff holding 300 series contracts can be identified for, or apply for, a mission reassignment to another special mission with no right of return to the releasing mission. Similarly, 300 series locally recruited staff can be identified for, or apply for, a mission reassignment to another special mission. Provided that established criteria are adhered to, after six months such staff can be considered for a reappointment as international staff (typically with a 300 series ALD), but by doing so they forego all rights of return to their releasing mission.

12. To cater effectively for surge periods and emergency operational requirements all categories of field staff may be asked to travel on official travel status (temporary duty) for periods of usually up to three months, during which they maintain their right of return to their post in the releasing mission.

III. Established organizational administrative instructions, policies and guidelines on mission assignment/detail

13. The Organization's policy governing staff members' assignment to and return from mission service is contained in Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/277 of 19 May 1995. Concurrently, administrative instruction ST/AI/404 of 19 May 1995 was issued, containing procedures and guidelines applicable to that policy. Those procedures and guidelines took cognizance of the overall objectives of the Organization in the context of the exceptional growth in United Nations peacekeeping and related field operations and the operational burden on departments borne by the demand to supply qualified staff to serve in field missions. They also

derive from the legitimate concerns of staff looking to incorporate mission service into their professional and personal growth.

14. Specifically, administrative instruction ST/AI/404 addresses the assignment to, and blocking of, posts of staff members on mission detail; mission replacement; training and preparing staff for mission assignment; and debriefing and reintegration of staff returning from mission service.

15. The Organization's new staff selection system set forth in administrative instruction ST/AI/2002/4 of 23 April 2002 has also provided a new framework for the selection of field personnel by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The system is designed to meet a variety of human resources requirements for the Organization, principally the need for multiskilled, versatile workforce and providing staff, through enhanced mobility mechanisms, with greater career opportunities and new and challenging experiences.

IV. Enhancements to the mechanisms of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for the selection, reassignment and rotation of staff

16. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has drawn on the provisions in Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/277 and in administrative instructions ST/AI/404 and ST/AI/2002/4 to enhance further procedures for recruitment, selection and reassignment of civilian field personnel. Those procedures take into account the recommendations pertaining to civilian staffing for peacekeeping operations contained in both the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (see A/55/305-S/2000/809) and the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting staff for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (A/57/224) and the recommendations arising from the Global Staffing Strategy (May 2001) as included in the Secretary-General's report on implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/977, paras. 154-163).

17. In illustration of those enhancements, since March 2002, vacancy announcements, either generic or specific, have become the normal means of filling vacant posts in field missions, particularly in special missions following initial start-up. All Department of Peacekeeping Operations field missions have access to advertised vacancy announcements through the Department's web site. In the 12 months to 31 March 2003, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations advertised and filled 556 posts in the Professional and Director categories and 80 posts in the Field Service category.

18. Inherent in the wider use of vacancy announcements to fill vacant posts is a more transparent and competitive process providing enhanced opportunities for career development and mobility of all United Nations staff, international and locally recruited, in field missions. The wider use of vacancy announcements has been complemented by the Department's systematic development, during the course of 2002-2003, of generic job profiles for occupations in the Field Service and Professional categories that were approved by the Office of Human Resources Management.

19. To apply for a post advertised in a specific or generic vacancy announcement, interested staff members submit a personal history profile (PHP) or a mission application form to the Personnel Management and Support Service in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Increasingly, such applications are being submitted electronically through the use of Galaxy and the Department's Lotus Notes mailbox. In the event that applications are not forthcoming to meet a specific operational requirement (particularly for unique "governance" posts), the Department conducts a search for qualified staff from its peacekeeping database and, if necessary, from its roster of external candidates.

20. Further enhancing the integrity of the recruitment and selection process, in 2002 the Department of Peacekeeping Operations trained all of its Placement Officers and Chief Civilian Personnel Officers in missions in the principles and mechanics of competency-based interviewing. Increasingly, all staff in field missions are receiving formal instruction on the United Nations core competencies for the future and the career and mobility linkages of those competencies to the preparation of vacancy announcements, their own PHPs and to the e-PAS, systematically being introduced to all civilian field staff, both international and locally recruited, during the course of 2003.

21. In March 2003, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations launched the Rapid Deployment Roster (RDR), aimed at enhancing the Department's ability to deploy a pre-screened and pre-trained core of experienced field staff to a new mission within 14 days. Staff that volunteer for the RDR undertake a commitment to deploy for up to 90 days, during which time the Personnel Management and Support Service will initiate a comprehensive, transparent, recruitment and selection process to backfill RDR staff returning to their releasing missions. As at 2 April 2003, the Department had received 1,699 applications from staff to be considered for the RDR, 611 of which were from locally recruited staff in established and special peacekeeping missions.

22. In preparing shortlists of candidates for selection, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations gives preference to serving staff members of the Secretariat, FSOs and civilian staff in field missions over the recruitment of external candidates. All staff selected for the Rapid Deployment Roster are civilian staff, both international and locally recruited, serving at Headquarters and in field missions. During the recruitment and selection process, paramount consideration is given to the selection of staff on merit with due consideration to geographic and gender balance in missions. In the two missions where the Department has delegated limited authority for the mission to recruit and select staff (United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor/United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNTAET/UNMISET)), monitoring mechanisms are in place to ensure adherence to the above principles.

V. Conclusions

23. **The enhancements to the recruitment, selection and reassignment procedures of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations need to be considered in the context of current global trends in the staffing of peacekeeping operations. Perhaps the most critical constraint limiting career and mobility of civilian staff in field missions is the recent reduction in the total**

number of posts in peacekeeping operations. Throughout 2001, the number of budgeted international peacekeeping posts was approximately 5,700. By early 2002 that number had increased to 6,000; however by the end of March 2003, the number had dropped to 4,700.

24. **While that reduction is an indication that civilian staff have made a significant contribution to achieving mandated responsibilities (particularly in UNTAET/UNMISET and the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina), it effectively limits the career and mobility opportunities of all categories of civilian staff.**

25. **The processes and criteria by which mission staff are recruited and selected for mission assignment/detail, reassignment or rotation to another field mission have evolved, from a centralized Headquarters-managed decision-making process, to one in which all staff are given an opportunity to compete in a transparent and competitive system. Inextricably linked to that evolution is greater responsibility and accountability for managers involved in many aspects of the procedures. The enhanced mechanisms are ensuring that Department of Peacekeeping Operations civilian staff have greater opportunity than at any previous time to pursue and achieve career and mobility goals.**

Notes

[1] While acknowledging the current nomenclature referring to all United Nations staff as international civil servants set forth in Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2002/18, for the purposes of the present report internationally recruited international civil servants will be referred to as international staff and locally recruited international civil servants will be referred to as locally recruited staff.